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Smithsonian Explores History and Experiences of Black Latinos in the United States

The Smithsonian Latino Center and the National Museum of American History will host a panel conversation and book signing for the newly released book *The Afro-Latin@ Reader* Feb. 26 at 2 p.m. in the museum's Carmichael Auditorium. The panel consists of the book's editors, Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores, with contributing author María Rosario Jackson and Washington D.C.-based activist Roland Roebuck. The book will be available for purchase at the conclusion of the conversation. This program is free and open to the public.

The Afro-Latin@ Reader focuses on the history and experiences of people of African descent from Latin America and the Caribbean living in the United States. This large and vibrant group has remained invisible throughout much of America's recent history. The book shows how this diverse population bridges the divide between Latinos and African Americans by focusing on their similarities rather than on their differences. It provides insight into Afro-Latino life in the United States and offers new ways to understand culture, ethnicity, nation, identity and antiracist politics. It also addresses history, music, gender, class and media representations in more than 60 selections, including scholarly essays, memoirs, newspaper and magazine articles, poetry, short stories and interviews.

"This presentation provides an interesting view into the life of Afro-Latinos in the U.S. today," said Eduardo Díaz, director of the Latino Center. "It is important to highlight these shared histories and experiences. This is how we learn tolerance and peace, and only by seeing how close we are to each other can we ever advance and evolve as a society."

Many of the selections highlighted in the book focus on the past 50 years, although some go back to the mid-16th century to the arrival of Spanish-speaking Africans in North America. The central question posed throughout the book is how Afro-Latinos relate to and experience U.S. and Latin American racial ideologies. The panelists will share their stories related to the Afro-Latino experience in the United States as well as cite examples and stories in the book.

About the Authors

Román is a visiting scholar in the Africana Studies Program at New York University and executive director of Afrolatin@ Forum, a research and resource center focusing on black Latinos in the United States.

Flores is professor in the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University. His most recent books include *The Diaspora Strikes Back: Caribeño Tales of Learning and Turning* and *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity* as well as the English translation of Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá's book *Cortijo's Wake*.

The Smithsonian Latino Center is the division of the Smithsonian Institution that ensures that Latino contributions to art, science and the humanities are highlighted, understood and advanced through the development and support of public programs, scholarly research, museum collections and educational opportunities at the Smithsonian Institution and its affiliated organizations across the United States and internationally. Website: <http://latino.si.edu>

The National Museum of American History is located on Constitution Ave, between 12th and 14th Streets N.W. The museum collects, preserves and displays American heritage in the areas of social, political, cultural, scientific and military history. Website: <http://americanhistory.si.edu> For Smithsonian information, the public may call (202) 633-1000, (202) 633-5285 (TTY).

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